DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 096 934 HE 005 962

AUTHOR	Thomas, Gerald W.
TITLE	Limit Our Horizons in the Land of Enchantment? The Challenge for Education.
INSTITUTION	New Mexico State Univ., Las Cruces.
PUB DATE	21 Jun 74
NOTE	17p.; Position paper presented to the Board of Educational Finance Meeting in Portales, New Mexico, June 21, 1974
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Changing Attitudes; *College Bound Students; Educational Assessment; Educational Needs; *Educational Trends; Enrollment Trends; *Higher Education; *High Schools; *Statistical Data
IDENTIFIERS	*New Mexico

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the trends in participation in higher education for New Mexico. Statistical data indicated that only 39 percent of the high school graduates in 1973 planned to enter college after graduation. Barriers to advanced education and training are discussed including intellectual barriers, financial barriers, and environmental and attitudinal barriers. Positive steps to increase participation in higher education and increase the quality of that education are presented, including: (1) The opening of opportunities for higher education and specialized career training beyond the high school to at least 65 percent of the New Mexico high school graduates within the next 5-year span (2) The realization that some potential students need extra counseling and services without compromising educational standards. Appropriations for these programs would be doubled each year for the next 5-year period. (3) The evaluation of programs and grants in aid. Much more emphasis should be placed on work-study programs. (4) Educational Programs should be designed to maximize options for career development. (5) More positive approaches should be taken to develop and support life-long education and retraining for all age groups. (Author)

ED 096934

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Why Limit Our Horizons In The Land Of Enchantment ?

THE CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Gerald W. Thomas, Ph.D.
President, New Mexico State University

A Position Paper presented to the Board of Educational Finance
Meeting in Portales, New Mexico, June 21, 1974

HE 005962

WHY LIMIT OUR HORIZONS IN THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT?

THE CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION*

New Mexico, because of its geographic and cultural setting, has an unusual opportunity and challenge through education to develop a desirable "quality of life" for its people. But, today there are serious limitations — serious concerns about education at all levels. Many young people are disenchanted in the Land of Enchantment. It is the purpose of this paper to present some of these concerns, to briefly analyze some key statistics, and to pose some challenging questions for legislative bodies, educational institutions, and individual citizens. While the thrust of this paper is directed toward higher education, the challenge is much broader, reaching into elementary and secondary education and extending into "life-long" education for adults.

NATIONAL TRENDS IN EDUCATION ARE CAUSE FOR ALARM

An examination of recent national data on the proportion of high school graduates going to college or into other specialized training is cause for alarm. In the U.S. we reached an all-time high for participation in college in 1968, with 55 per cent of the high school graduates entering college (see Table 1). Since 1968 the trend has been downward, and in 1972, only 49 per cent of the graduating class went on to advanced training. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1), this is the lowest point in eight years, and "an increasing number of white, male high school graduates are going directly into the labor force instead of to college." In addition, the BLS stated that 750,000 youths left high school before receiving a diploma. Unemployment was especially high among these dropouts, the Agency said.

---

* A position paper presented to the Board of Educational Finance (The Commission on Post Secondary Education) by Gerald W. Thomas, President, New Mexico State University, June 21, 1974, Portales, New Mexico.

TABLE I

PROPORTION OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLED IN COLLEGE IN OCTOBER OF THE YEAR OF GRADUATION, 1962-72*

(Percent)

Year of graduation	All persons	Men	Women	White	Negro and other races
1962	49	55	43	51	34
1963	45	52	39	46	38
1964	48	57	41	49	39
1965	51	57	45	52	43
1966	50	59	43	52	32
1967	52	58	47	53	42
1968	55	63	49	57	46
1969	54	60	47	55	37
1970	52	55	49	52	48
1971	53	58	50	54	47
1972	49	53	46	49	48

* Adapted from Employment of High School Graduates and Dropouts Oct. 1972 (Special Labor Force Report 155), Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20212.

NEW MEXICO LAGS BEHIND THE NATION

While I am concerned about the national trends, I am even more concerned about our New Mexico youth — because we usually fall well below the national averages for participation in higher education. In surveys conducted by the State Department of Education (2), only 39 per cent of the high school graduates entered college in 1972, and only 44 per cent of the high school graduates in 1973 planned to enter college after graduation (see Table 2).

Sixteen high schools send less than 30 per cent of their graduates to advanced training. What are the reasons for this lack of interest in higher education? What factors influence the attitudes and decisions of our New Mexico youth? Why is there so much variation from community to community? How important are parental attitudes and the actions of community leaders?

In order to break the serious poverty and welfare routines in this state, we must prepare our youth for the job market. College training and vocational-technical training are a necessity. Specialized training increases "MOBILITY" in the job search and a corps of trained people also offers new business or industry an incentive to move to New Mexico.

Level of education has a direct bearing on family income. Bureau of Census data for 1970 show the following mean income by educational level of the head of the household:

Elementary	$ 5,747 to $ 7,253
High School.....	8,757 to 10,422
College	11,761 to 15,980

In addition to providing career opportunities for our youth, the university can and should serve as a resource for persons of all age levels to maintain or upgrade their professional skills and to enrich their lives. The "life enrichment" aspects of education are frequently overlooked in our pragmatic approaches

TABLE 2

NEW MEXICO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES 1972-73

(Data from State of New Mexico, Department of Education)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Number of Graduates	Planning to Enter College	
		Number	/ Percentage
Alamogordo	489	249	51
Albuquerque	5,587	2,122	38
Animas	13	12	92
Artesia	208	96	46
Aztec	152	56	37
Belen	202	93	46
Bernalillo	164	91	55
Bloomfield	119	62	52
Capitan	14	6	43
Carlsbad	464	222	48
Carrizozo	31	7	23
Central	178	65	37
Chama Valley	58	30	52
Cimarron	25	10	40
Clayton	73	30	41
Cloudcroft	11	8	73
Clovis	449	212	47
Cobre	190	70	37
Corona	14	7	50
Cuba	54	39	72
Deming	219	62	28
Des Moines	25	18	72
Dexter	41	23	56
Dora	25	18	72
Dulce	39	29	74
Elida	15	11	73
Encino	15	8	53
Espanola	325	107	33
Estancia	40	11	28
Eunice	66	44	67
Farmington	431	220	51
Floyd	10	5	50
Fort Sumner	53	22	42
Gadsden	240	74	31
Gallup	620	320	52
Grady	22	21	95
Grants	290	130	45
Hagerman	32	12	38
Hatch	53	20	38
Hobbs	530	245	46
Hondo Valley	11	9	82
House	7	5	71
Jal	65	36	55
Jemez Mountain	20	14	70
Jemez Springs	61	39	64
Lake Arthur	15	3	20
Las Cruces	1,023	416	41

New Mexico High School Graduates 1972-73

PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Number of Graduates	Planning to Enter College	
		Number	/ Percentage
Las Vegas City	168	79	47
Las Vegas West	131	64	49
Logan	20	9	45
Lordsburg	76	18	24
Los Alamos	386	302	78
Los Lunas	217	61	28
Lovington	170	108	64
Magdalena	35	19	54
Maxwell	12	6	50
Melrose	22	10	45
Mora	76	21	28
Moriarty	45	20	44
Mosquero	8	2	25
Mountainair	24	10	42
Ojo Caliente	42	13	31
Pecos	50	9	18
Penasco	62	14	23
Pojoaque Valley	99	71	72
Portales	186	82	44
Quemado	4	1	25
Questa	53	24	45
Raton	144	75	52
Reserve	18	12	67
Roswell	652	355	54
Roy	21	5	24
Ruidoso	53	24	45
San Jon	18	2	11
Santa Fe	621	182	29
Santa Rosa	78	25	32
Silver City	204	96	47
Socorro	113	53	47
Springer	34	16	47
T or C	86	33	38
Taos	220	86	39
Tatum	24	19	79
Texico	25	10	40
Tucumcari	130	50	38
Tularosa	96	25	26
Vaughn	18	7	39
Wagon Mound	19	5	26
TOTAL - PUBLIC SCHOOLS	17,248	7,432	43.0

New Mexico High School Graduates 1972-73

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Number of Graduates	Planning to Enter College Number	/ Percentage
Albuquerque Academy	50	50	100
Albuquerque Indian	43	28	65
American Indian Arts	62	43	69
Harwood High	5	0	0
McCurdy Mission	40	24	60
Menaul High	31	17	55
Navajo Methodist	17	9	53
Ramah Navajo High	18	17	94
Rehoboth Mission	15	11	73
Sandia School	13	13	100
Sandia View Academy	27	18	67
Santa Fe Preparatory	22	20	91
St. Catherine Indian	37	35	95
St. Michael's High	85	56	66
St. Pius High	139	77	55
Wingate High	151	26	17
TOTAL - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS	755	444	59
SPECIAL, STATE-SUPPORTED SCHOOLS			
Foothill High	4	1	25
N. Mex. Military Institute	86	68	79
N. Mex. Visual Handicapped	15	10	67
TOTAL - SPECIAL SCHOOLS	105	79	75
GRAND TOTAL	18,108	7,955	44

Compiled from data submitted by school superintendents, summer 1973. Includes 1973 summer school graduates.

to the support of colleges and universities. College-trained people should make better citizens because they are better informed about social, economic and political systems and the complicated interactions between and among peoples in a highly scientific and rapidly changing world environment.

THE UNIQUE CHALLENGE IN NEW MEXICO

I emphasize that the opportunities for strengthening education in New Mexico are unique because the people and circumstances in New Mexico are unique. For one thing, we have more variation in people, in cultures, and in economic status than most states. We have all kinds and combinations of circumstances for study, for analysis, and for improvement. For example, in the 1970 census, Spanish-Americans constituted a majority in 18 of New Mexico's 32 counties and more than 80 per cent of the population in Guadalupe, Rio Arriba, San Miguel and Taos counties (3). The State's population is now 40.1 per cent Spanish-American (by the census definition). Indians constitute a majority in McKinley County and make up 35-40 per cent of the population in San Juan and Sandoval counties. The 72,788 New Mexicans that are American Indians constitute 7.16 per cent of New Mexico's population — a greater percentage than any other state (4). Blacks were a minority in every county and constituted 1.9 per cent of the total State population. Other races, according to the census, added to about 0.9 per cent.

The unique cultural mix presents a real challenge to higher education for two reasons. First, there is a strong demand for well-trained college graduates with minority classifications -- particularly with graduate degrees. New Mexico can and should supply these people for state, national, and world-wide services. Secondly, the minorities have not traditionally participated in specialized training to the same extent as the other Americans. A 1972

sampling by the Bureau of Labor Statistics based on race, produced the startling finding that, "among all youth of Spanish origin aged 16 to 24, one in three was a school dropout (1)."

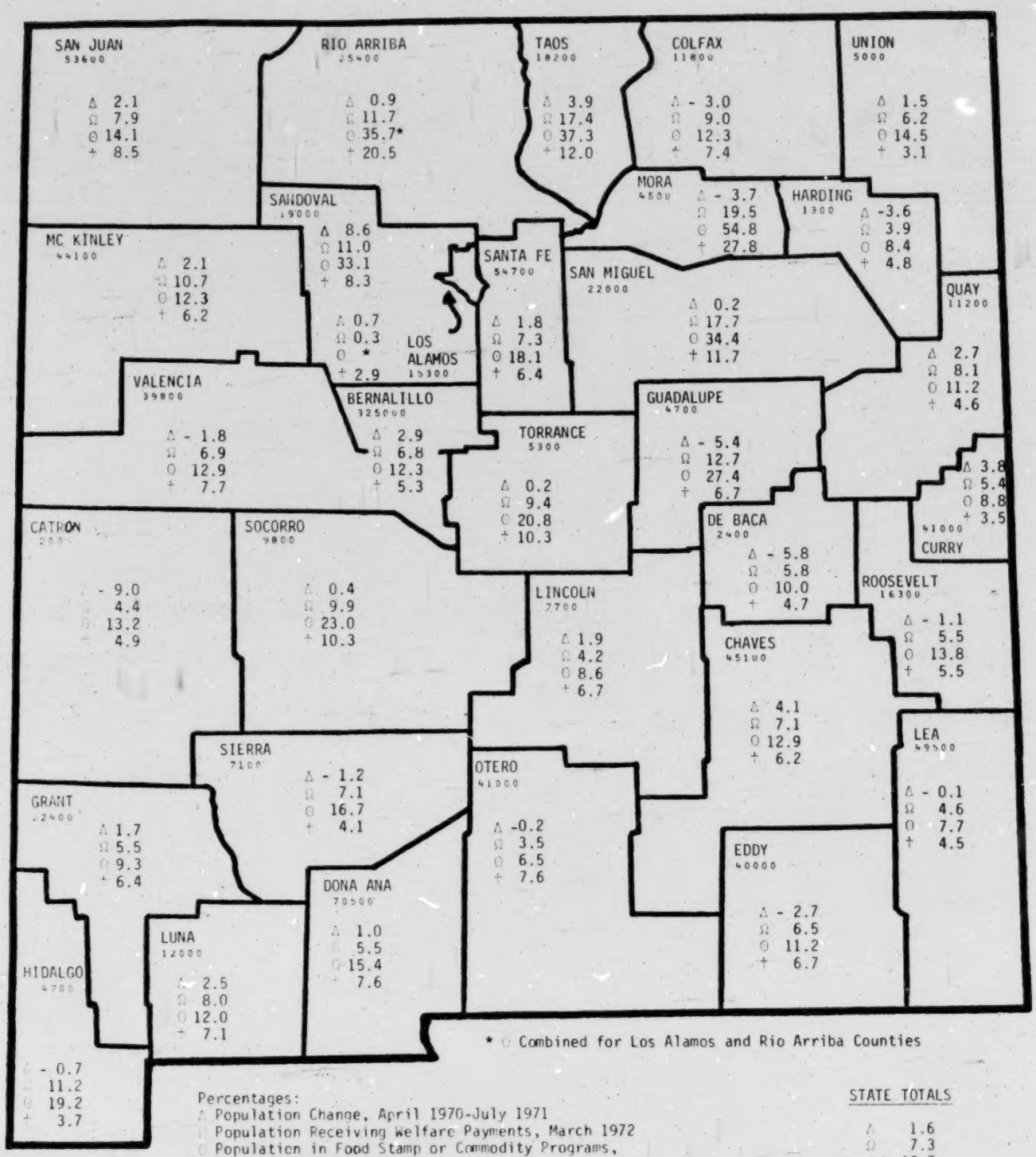
Although about one-third of the State's population resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico is still largely a "rural" area. And, again, many rural youth (of all ethnic groups) are not adequately represented in programs of higher education.

While variation in cultures presents a unique challenge to education, variation in economic status is no less important. Figure 1 presents the county by county economic status for the State as compiled by the Bureau of Business Research at UNM (5). Over 30 per cent of the population in five counties were on food stamp or commodity programs. In seven counties, more than ten per cent of the population were receiving welfare payments as of March, 1972, and in two counties people on welfare exceeded 17 per cent. Although statistics are not available, I suspect the situation has become worse in the past two years.

One of the studies by NMSU, being conducted under support of the Four Corners Regional Commission, produced the following profile of consumers in a Northern New Mexico county (6):

--- 68 per cent of the respondent families had incomes under $3000
--- 44 per cent of the heads of households have not been schooled beyond the eighth grade; only 23 per cent completed high school
--- Unemployment was a high 42 per cent of respondent families. Nutrition was very poor in these families and food costs in relation to income were very high -- and going up.

Without better training, what chance do we have to break these welfare patterns, improve the living conditions, or move people into the job market? Forty per cent of the State's residents are now under 18 years of age. New Mexico has the highest proportion of school-age children among the 50 states because of high birth rates (7). This leadership for tomorrow is ripe for educational development.



SOURCES: Δ Population Change: Bureau of Business Research, ISRAD, The University of New Mexico.
Ω Population Receiving Welfare Payments: New Mexico Health and Social Services Department.
O Population in Food Stamp or Commodity Programs: New Mexico Health and Social Services Department.
+ Unemployment: Employment Security Commission of New Mexico.

Figure 1. NEW MEXICO'S ECONOMIC STATUS 1972 (Bureau of Business Research, ISRAD, UNM)

BARRIERS TO ADVANCED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Why are New Mexico youth limiting their horizons? What are the barriers to increased participation in higher education and other forms of advanced training? Are they real? Or imagined?

(1) Are there significant intellectual barriers? I doubt that there are. Admittedly, some of our young people are disadvantaged in many ways - but these problems are not primarily related to intelligence or aptitude. New Mexico youth should be comparable to youth in other parts of the Nation.

(2) What about financial barriers? New Mexico is a "low-income per capita" State. We are near the bottom in the United States. There are very serious problems for the poor and, increasingly, middle-income families are finding difficulty paying taxes and supporting their children who may choose to go to college. There are several programs both at the state level and from the federal government to assist with the financial barriers to higher education. A more detailed analysis of these programs is needed, their efficiency determined, and an increased effort made to strengthen those programs and techniques which are demonstratively sound.

(3) What are the environmental and attitudinal barriers? These, in my opinion, are the most serious, the most insidious. In some communities and in some high schools (see Table 2) there is little motivation for advanced training. Why is this? Why do some very, very poor families make the sacrifice necessary to place one, two or sometimes five or six children in college while others show no interest? How often does financing become an excuse, an easy way out, a substitute for a more serious problem -- an apathetic attitude, or lack of motivation? Is it true that communities with a high level of welfare and large food stamp program have a low interest in advanced training?

The National Commission on the Financing of Post Secondary Education in a recent report stated that providing better access to advanced training was the most significant recommendation from their study (8). Three other conclusions were as follows:

(1) While family income level is clearly important in determining a student's participation in college, at least two other factors are statistically more important: the high school curriculum followed by the student, and the father's educational attainment. (What does this say about breaking the educational patterns in some New Mexico communities?)

(2) The rates of participation in post-secondary education for Blacks, American Indians, and persons of Mexican parentage or birth are far below the participation rates for other Americans, while persons of Japanese and Chinese descent have extraordinarily high participation rates — higher in fact than all other Americans. (Can we take some lessons from Japanese and Chinese families?)

(3) Women are under-represented in post-secondary institutions, constituting 51 per cent of the 18-24 year old age group, but only 44 per cent of the undergraduate enrollment and 39 per cent of the graduate enrollment. (This challenge also exists in New Mexico.)

TOWARD MAXIMIZING THE OPTIONS

Variation is a recognized phenomenon in all living organisms, including the species, Homo sapiens. Certainly New Mexico, as I have tried to emphasize, is not exempt from this circumstance. Variation among individuals is one of the primary sources of frustration for politicians, businessmen, and educators. But in this source of frustration — in variation — lies also the greatest opportunity for progress and excellence for our society. From this variation

among people, if we can design our training programs properly and achieve participation, will arise the leaders of this state — the nation — and the World. Leadership will come from variability — not conformity; from the excellent — not the average.

"We have both plumbers and philosophers, and unless we provide quality education for both, neither our pipes nor our ideas will hold water." (9). This means that we need quality programs in vocational-technical or career training as well as traditional degree programs. My plea is to add to the total educational effort by strengthening vocational programs, and continue to strengthen the university degree programs that are so badly needed for life enrichment and career enhancement. In the promotion of vocational programs, let us not forget the need to continue and to strengthen the other University offerings — through the graduate level. If vocational programs can be developed at the universities as well as the community colleges, students will have more options for program selection or change. "Crossover" and "ladder" approaches to education can be designed.

I like the term "to develop diversified excellence" as a state-wide goal. We should capitalize on our diversity of interests and backgrounds. Neglect of any one sector is socially and politically unacceptable — perhaps even dangerous. Witness the problem in Watts or other central cities when people are left out of the mainstream of education. The National Post Secondary Education Commission stated that "Post secondary education should offer programs of formal instruction and other learning opportunities and engage in research and public service of sufficient diversity to be responsive to the changing needs of individuals and society." (8). There is certainly a place for "different" institutions with "different" roles in higher education in New Mexico.

One very important aspect of "diversity" in university programs is the concept of "life-long education." The complexities of science and technology, and the increasing social, political, and economic interactions of the world's people make it difficult for any one of us to keep abreast. With the rapid expansion of knowledge, even an expert engineer will become obsolescent in his field in less than ten years without constant exposure to continuing education. No one is ever completely educated. Education is a life-long process. We must be constantly exposed to programs of continuing education in our own specialty as well as other educational programs for life enrichment.

Furthermore, we should take positive steps to erase the concept of a "drop-out" as a failure — and substitute the term "stop-out." For many persons the "stop-out" approach is the best approach to gain maturity, work experience and appreciation for advanced training. It is never too late to return to college. We see more and more retired people and grandparents on our campuses these days. Indeed, the challenge to develop better programs for life-long education is very real.

- SUMMARY -

As I stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper was to express concern about attitudes toward, and participation in, educational programs in New Mexico. The responsibility for correcting some of the problems referred to in this paper rests with the Board of Educational Finance, (partly as the Commission on Post Secondary Education) in conjunction with the colleges, universities, the State Board of Education, public schools, and legislative bodies. I do not have all of the answers to the questions raised — nor am I satisfied that we have adequate or sufficient data on which to base some of our action programs. However, there are some positive steps that can and must be taken in the interest of all people in New Mexico:

(1) We must not be content to lag behind the nation in education. Indeed, our unique diversity and opportunity should broaden our horizons. I propose that a goal be set for New Mexico — "To extend opportunities for higher education and specialized career training beyond the high school to at least 65 per cent of our New Mexico high school graduates." This can and should be done within a 5-year period.

(2) The experience gained from the line-item appropriation called "College Opportunity Program" has already shown that disadvantaged students can perform if some extra help is provided. We need not compromise our standards or degrade the degree, but we must recognize that some potential students need extra counseling and service. The appropriations for these programs should be doubled each year for the next 5-year period.

(3) Positive steps must be taken to reduce financial barriers for students and their families. We should re-examine all "loan" programs and "grants-in-aid." Much more emphasis must be placed on "earn while you learn" approaches. It is better to "work your way through college" than to "borrow

your way through." Work experience while in college makes a better student and a better citizen. State agencies can be encouraged and financed to hire more students, Co-op programs with private industry can be expanded, and special appropriations can be made for more "work-study" approaches at the universities.

(4) Educational programs should be designed to "maximize options" for career development. Diversity in institutions, flexibility in programs, and adequate financial support will accomplish this objective.

(5) More positive approaches should be taken to develop and support "life-long" education and retraining for all age groups to enhance their work effectiveness as well as for life enrichment. The New Mexico Commission on Post Secondary Education has expressed an interest in programs for the non-traditional student. Much remains to be done.

(6) Thorough study and analysis of the factors influencing the attitudes of New Mexico citizens and communities must be made. Apathy about quality education or disenchantment with education is insidious and dangerous. Adequate programs and adequate investments in education are a necessity.

The future leaders for New Mexico are among our youth. Will we accept the responsibility to prepare them for the awesome challenge ahead?

LITERATURE CITED

(1) Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment of High School Graduates and Dropouts, October, 1972. Special Labor Force Report 155, Washington, D.C., 1973.

(2) State of New Mexico Department of Education. 1972-73 New Mexico High School Graduates. 1974 Report.

(3) Sigurd Johansen. The People of New Mexico. NMSU Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 606. 1974.

(4) Robert Locke. New Mexico Truly Multicultural. AP News Report on the 1970 Census.

(5) Bureau of Business Research, New Mexico's Economic Status, 1972. ISRAD, U.N.M. 1973.

(6) NMSU Cooperative Extension Service. Preliminary Report on Studies of Consumers and Retail Food Stores in New Mexico. May, 1974.

(7) National Education Association Research Report. How New Mexico Stacks Up On Education - 1972. December, 1972.

(8) Ben Lawrence. Financing Post Secondary Education in the United States. Perspective on the report of the National Commission on the Financing of Post Secondary Education. Education Commission of the States, Report No. 46. Feb, 1974.

(9) John W. Gardner. Excellence. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1961.